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UNCLAS JAKARTA 000065

STATE FOR R/PPR, EAP/PD - RFerguson-Augustus, EAP/MTS, PA/OBS -
GSantulli
VOA for Norman Goodman

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: Indonesia: RCTI/Trans-7 "Elections" TV Co-Op Report

REF: 08 JAKARTA 1805

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: National television stations RCTI and Trans-7 each produced a series of election programs about the 2008 U.S. Presidential Elections Co-op for an estimated total audience reach of over 25 million viewers. Funded by 2007 Pilot Country Program funds, Embassy's Public Affairs Section capitalized on the Indonesians' high interest in the current elections and created a special TV Co-op program as an opportunity to enhance election coverage in Muslim-majority Indonesia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) RCTI and Trans-7, two leading Jakarta-based national networks, worked together in a television pool under the direction of an OBS-hired producer for this special elections television co-op. Each participating station had its own independent ideas for coverage focus and stories, but both agreed to be flexible on themes and locations. This cooperation was designed to maximize coverage and not to impinge upon the freedom of either station. This helped an Indonesian audience gain understanding of American society in a timely manner, as the co-op ran mid-October through early November, and showed many different aspects of how the American democratic process works between the conventions and the actual voting on election day.

¶3. (U) RCTI ran more than 15 reports from October 23 through November 6 during regular morning, noon, primetime and late evening newscasts. Trans-7 did eight reports during its regular newscasts plus an additional one-hour special which took place with the journalist reporting live from Voice of America (VOA) studio in Washington, D.C. Filming took place in Detroit, Michigan, Columbus, Ohio, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Co-op with RCTI and Trans-7 provided first-hand perspectives on the U.S. electoral process, as well as giving an opportunity for Indonesians to gain an understanding of democracy in the U.S. Both RCTI and Trans-7 commented on how Indonesian politicians could learn from the U.S. campaigns.

¶4. (U) Production took place from October 19 through November 6 at various campaign sites, candidate headquarters, and educational institutions as well as other locations considered newsworthy or interesting. The programs were generally three-minute pieces combined with stand-up reporting. There were also opportunities for each of the anchors to sit in the VOA studio to talk live to their audiences during regular news programs. Although both crews shared filming, report packaging was done differently following the respective station's style and angle. RCTI had the propensity to compare particular features to similar Indonesian situations. On the other hand, Trans-7 to some extent tended to focus on the current American economic situation.

¶15. (U) While RCTI constantly transmitted its reporting through news reports during regular news broadcasts, Trans-7 did a combination of news reports and special programs, even before the crew's departure to the U.S. From a reporting standpoint, both stations re-aired particular reports as necessary. Parts of their reporting included issues around early voting, incessant campaigning as Election Day approached, the candidates' unique ways of campaigning, and Obama's victory. Although reports tended to focus more on Obama, both stations tried to be balanced by using VOA reporting in their programs.

¶16. (U) Conclusion: Putting together a successful TV Co-op of very positive reports enabled Embassy Jakarta to bring the U.S. election directly to Indonesian viewers. The U.S. election reporting attracted the attention of Indonesian media, as well as audiences largely due to Obama's candidacy. The programs were tailored to deliver ideas and messages in our mutual interest, but the messages from trusted Indonesian reporters and anchors were more credible than anything Embassy Jakarta could produce on its own. They contained objective perspectives and the hallmarks of an Indonesian journalistic style by two highly-respected local news stations.

¶17. Nielsen reports for newscast viewership in the days leading up to and post-Election Day showed significant increases in viewership. Both Trans-7's and RCTI news audiences increased by more than 10% during the period they covered the U.S. elections. Their consistent reporting conveyed the process and ideas of American democracy and society at a time when Indonesia is gearing up for its own

Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2009.

¶18. Special kudos go to PA/OBS George Santulli for his assistance on this Co-op and his selection of the field producer, Larry Clamage. Thanks, too, to R for funding this special project, which enabled Post to further the understanding of the complexities of U.S. democracy by a talented group of Indonesian journalists, who welcomed the opportunity to gain professional media experience and exposure to American society.

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